

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 04885 311642Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 4885

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS:PEPR PN VE
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PEREZ SEEKS TO INFORM USG ON PANAMANIAN
POLITICAL SITUATION

1. PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ RECENTLY RECEIVED A
DOCUMENT, APPARENTLY FROM MEMBERS OF PANAMANIAN LIBERAL
PARTY TITLED, "THE PANAMANIAN POLITICAL SITUATION."
PEREZ PASSED A COPY OF REPORT TO THE AMBASSADOR FOR
TRANSMISSION TO WASHINGTON, STRESSING HE WAS DOING SO IN
THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. PLEASE PROTECT.

2. THE REPORT REVIEWS THE RECENT MOVES TOWARD POLITICAL
LIBERALIZATION MADE BY BRIG. GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, NOTING THAT
LIBERALIZATION ALONG WITH TORRIJOS' EMERGENCY ECONOMIC
PLAN RESULTED FROM THE NEED TO CARRY OFF THE
TREATY PLEBISCITE. IT ARGUES THE "SUMMER DEMOCRACY" WAS
THE RESULT OF POLITICAL PRESSURES COMING OUT OF THE TREATY
RATIFICATION PROCESS AND THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL VISIT
TO PANAMA. WITH REGARD TO THE RETURN OF THE POLITICAL EXILES,
THE DOCUMENT CONTENDS THAT THE RETURN OF ARNULFO
ARRIAS HAS BEEN CREATING POLITICAL EXPECTATIONS, SINCE
ARRIAS STILL COMMANDS A SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING AND IT IS
POSSIBLE HE MAY COALESCE CURRENT POLITICAL OPPOSITION THUS
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COMPLICATING THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND NOT
FOR THE BEST. THE DOCUMENT GOES ON TO NOTE THAT IN A
RECENT FARALLON MEETING, IT BECAME APPARENT TORRIJOS'
ADVISERS ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO FACTIONS: ONE (HEADED BY
TORRIJOS' SISTER, BERTA TORRIJOS DE AROSEMENA AND HEALTH
MINISTER SAID) HAS ADVOCATED A HARD LINE WITH NO MORE
POLITICAL CONCESSIONS; THE OTHER (AND SMALLER-NO NAMES) HAS

ARGUED FOR CONTINUED LIBERALIZATION.

3. THE REPORT CONCLUDES POLITICAL CONDITIONS HAVE DETERIORATED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS WITH POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION CONCESSIONS WITHDRAWN OR NOT IMPLEMENTED, E.G., COMPLETE CUT-OFF OF OPPOSITIONS ACCESS TO MEDIA AND RESTRICTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE REORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES. AS A RESULT, OPPOSITION POLITICIANS (READ LIBERAL PARTY) ARE NOW DISCOURAGED. ALSO THE LIBERAL PARTY NOW STANDS ALONE (WITH OTHER PARTIES ABSTAINING) IN PUTTING FORTH CANDIDATES IN UPCOMING AUGUST ELECTIONS FOR CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES.

4. COMMENT: PEREZ PASSED DOCUMENT STATING HE WAS CONCERNED AND WANTED WASHINGTON INFORMED. HE STRESSED HE ENVISAGES NECESSARY PROGRESS THERE AS MOVING ON TWO PARALLEL TRACKS. THE FIRST WOULD BE TO MAKE SURE OPPOSITION DOES NOT FOCUS ONLY ON REMOVING TORRIJOS. THE SECOND IS TO ENCOURAGE TORRIJOS TO MAKE MOVES TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION.

5. EMBASSY POUCHING COPY OF DOCUMENT TO PANAMA AND THE DEPARTMENT.

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Message Attributes

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